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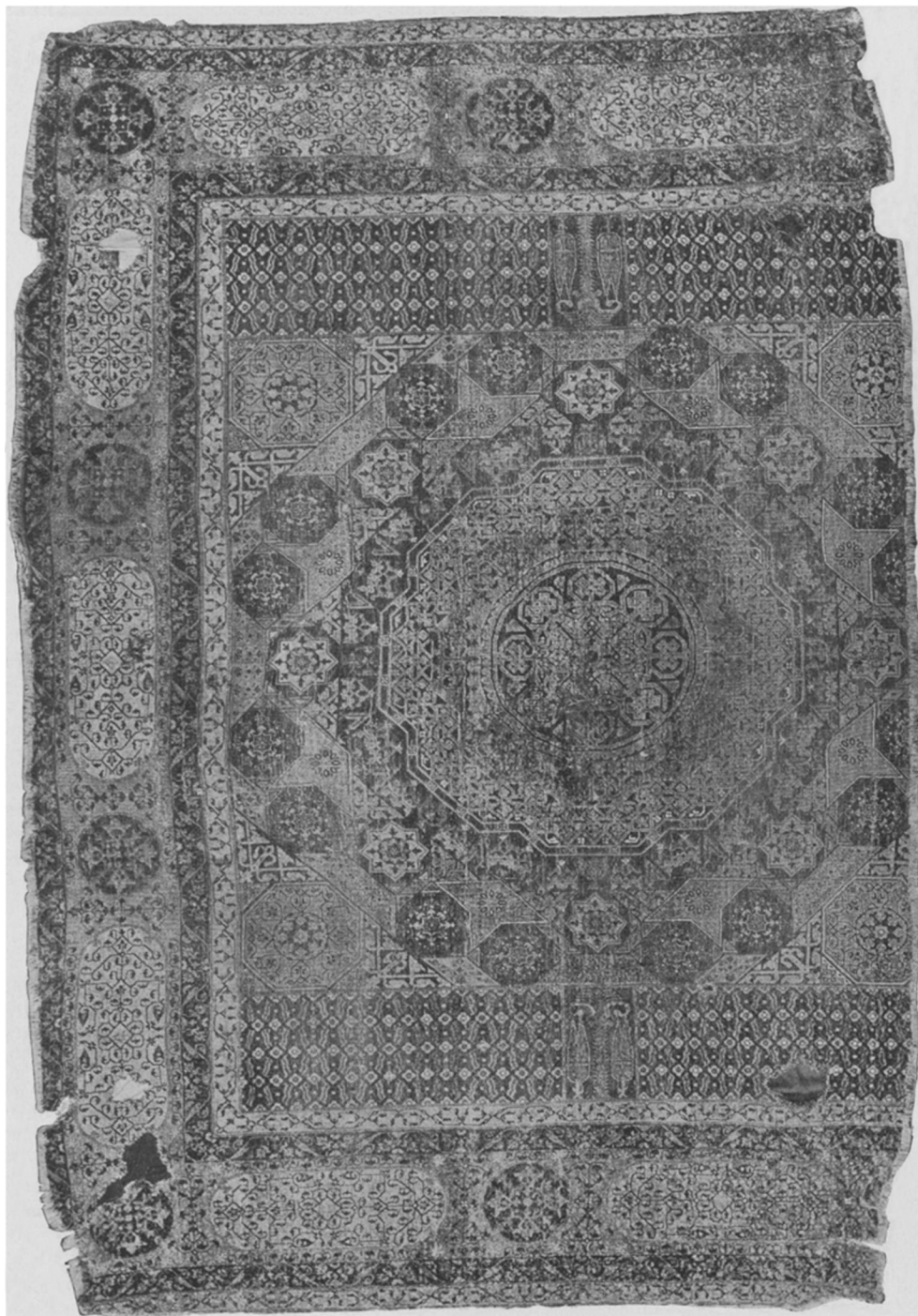
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So-called Damascus Rug

**Rugs Lent from the Collection of
Dr. George A. Kennedy and
Mrs. Mary Price Kennedy**

THERE have been hung recently in the Western Art Corridor rugs and pieces of rugs lent from the Collection of Dr. George A. Kennedy and Mrs. Mary Price Kennedy. Dr. and Mrs. Kennedy's Collection has been made during several years spent by them in Europe, and this is the first time that any of it has been seen in America. Furthermore, the rugs are, with one exception, quite different from any previously exhibited in Boston. The one exception is a large fragment of a so-called Ispahan or Herat carpet, which class is already represented by five pieces belonging to the Ross Collection and two large complete rugs, one lent by Mr. Lockwood de Forest and one from the Estate of Mr. T. Jefferson Coolidge, Jr. The piece belonging to the Kennedy Collection is especially beautiful in drawing, with long slender lines and curves connecting the large palmettes. It is much worn, but enough is left of the graceful design and rich colors, — deep pink, blue, yellow, orange, green and white — to show that this was an unusually fine rug of its kind. The dating and placing of rugs has been made possible, to a large degree, by old inventories, miniatures and paintings. Unfortunately, as a rule, we have to search for such illustrations in other museums and collections, but in this case it is not necessary to go further than the Spanish picture gallery, where we find a similar rug represented by Velasquez as a floor-covering in his painting of Don Baltazar Carlos and His Dwarf. This picture, which was painted in 1631, as well as others in which such rugs are to be seen, prove this type to have been made in the seventeenth century.

Another rug not found so frequently in pictures, but illustrated first, according to Dr. Wilhelm Bode of Berlin, in the "Disputation of St. Stephen," by Carpaccio (about 1450–1522), at the Brera Gallery, Milan, is the so-called Damascus rug. Again, in a portrait by Moroni, painted about 1550, a similar rug is seen. The origin of these so-called Damascus carpets has been much discussed. They have been called Hispano-Moresque and have been thought to have been manufactured in Morocco, Syria and Turkey. Dr. Wilhelm Valentiner of New York suggests the possibility of their Egyptian origin. On the other hand, Dr. Friedrich Sarre of Berlin, in the Catalogue of the Exhibition of Mohammedan Art held in Munich in 1910, describes them as from Nearer Asia, possibly Turkey.

The special rug under discussion has both a woolen warp, weft and pile, and is made with the Persian or Sehna knot. The ground is of deep red; the geometrical design, which is detailed with conventional floral and interlacing ornament, is of turquoise blue, light yellowish green, and touches of yellow. In the middle is a large medallion or

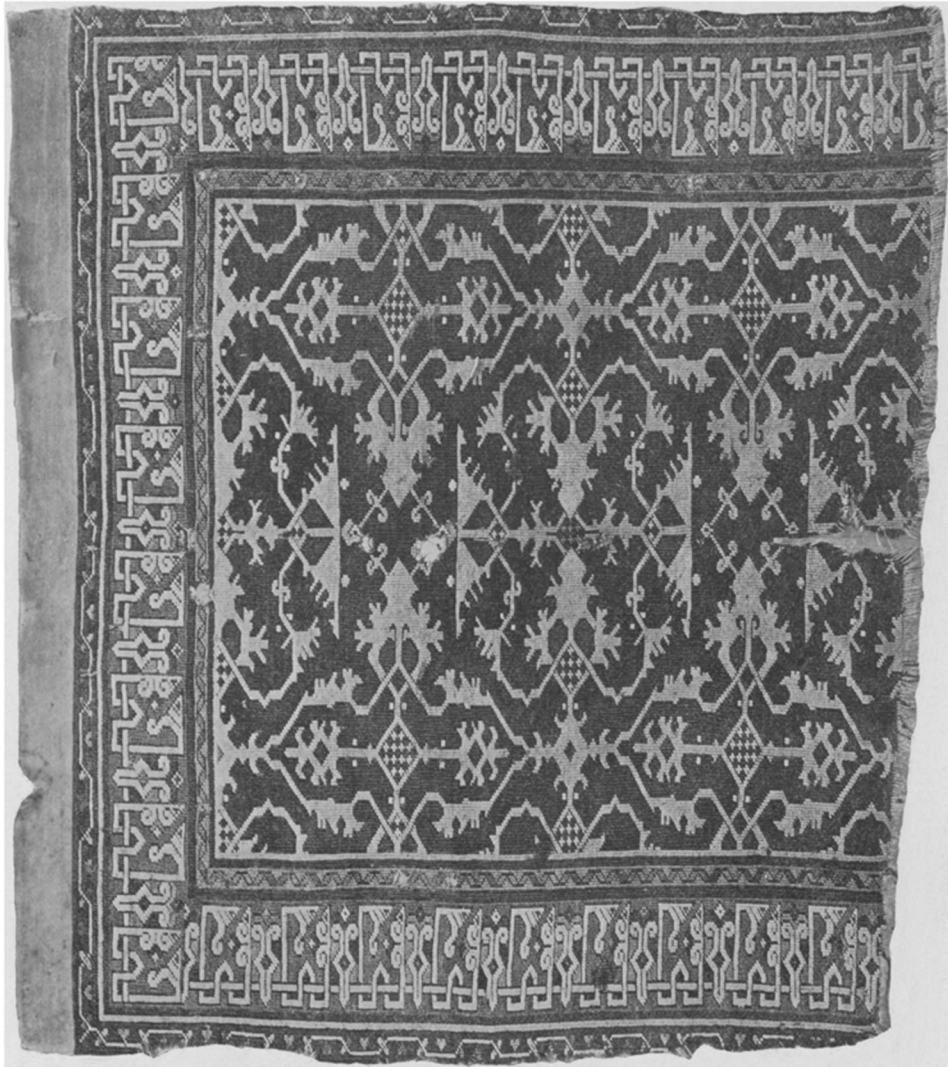
"star" surrounded by smaller stars. In the oblong panels on each side of the mainfield are leaves and flowers very similar to those found on the Rhodian pottery and Turkish velvets exhibited in the Nearer Orient Room, Cases 24 and 27. In the main border are alternating circular and oval medallions. These, like the main part of the rug, are covered with fine conventional floral ornament. The designs of the four guard bands consist of slender vines. The colors and the quality of the angora wool, of which this rug is made, give it a delicate bloom which is seen to best advantage when the piece is in a horizontal position — a method of exhibition which is unfortunately impossible at present in the Department of Western Art.

A third type of rug, of which there are three examples, two complete rugs and one large fragment, are the so-called Ushak rugs. These are of undoubted Asia Minor origin, and are seen in many paintings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. One of these rugs is especially well depicted in the Fisherman presenting St. Mark's ring to the Doge Guadenico, by Paris Bordone, in the Academy at Venice. In these rugs the warp, weft and pile are of wool, the latter being made with a Turkish, Ghiordes knot. Bright red and blue predominate in the color schemes; next in importance are various shades of yellow; and in some cases small touches of light blue and green are added. In one of the pieces with star-like motives the ground of the mainfield is red, in the other, blue. In the rugs in which the ground of the mainfield is blue, that of the main border is red and *vice versa*; and the color of the ground of the border is the important color of the design. These rugs are always large, being, roughly speaking, about twice as long as they are wide. They are distinguishable by their color as well as by their designs, which in some examples consist of large star-like forms filled with arabesques or delicate, conventional vines bearing flowers and leaves, and in others of a large circular, central medallion and sections of medallions treated in a similar manner.

In all of these rugs a delicate vine covers the ground. The borders are somewhat varied. In the piece illustrated in this article, the motives of the design of the main border are Chinese cloud bands and conventional flowers, while in the other complete rug of the same kind in the collection, one with a circular medallion in the middle, the design of the border consists of an angular vine bearing leaves and palmette-like flowers. There are also four examples of the Asia Minor rugs in which the bright red ground is covered with an all-over design of what are perhaps best described as angular arabesques. These arabesques are always strong yellow detailed with bright, deep blue, red and white and in some cases outlined with black. The typical border of these rugs is shown in the fragment illustrated. In effect it imitates the Kufic inscriptions so frequently used in a decorative way in the East in all forms of what are sometimes called



Asia Minor Carpet (so-called Ushak)



Asia Minor Rug

the applied arts. In this piece great brilliancy is given to the rug by the combination of the green ground of the border with the white, red, light blue, yellow and black of the design. In fact, the quality, proportion and combination of the colors in this piece give an almost jewel-like effect. In the painting of "St. Antoninus of Florence Giving Alms," by Lorenzo Lotto, in the Church of S. S. Giovanni e Paolo in Venice, is a rug so similar to this piece in the Kennedy Collection that it might almost have been painted from it. The other three pieces are more subdued in color, and the borders of cloud bands and conventional flowers are less pleasing in proportion and scale.

I have only cited two examples of pictures in which the last two types of rugs are illustrated. The truth of the matter is that both of these rugs were very popular in Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and it would require more space than we

have here to enumerate the various paintings in which they are to be seen. Of a very different character is the rug which, for convenience, is generally spoken of in German writings as a rug with the bird design. Much use of the imagination helps us to recognize in the elongated forms that radiate from open flowers a conventional bird in profile. In these rugs the grounds of the mainfield and all of the borders are white. The mainfield is covered by an all-over design of "birds" and flowers, knotted with violet, red, blue, dark green and yellow. The border on this particular rug has a design of cloud bands and open flowers similar in arrangement to several others in the collection, but quite different in rendering. Four smaller rugs, also typical in design and color of the work of Asia Minor, complete the number of rugs exhibited from that country, but mention must be made of a large Persian rug in which the field is covered with

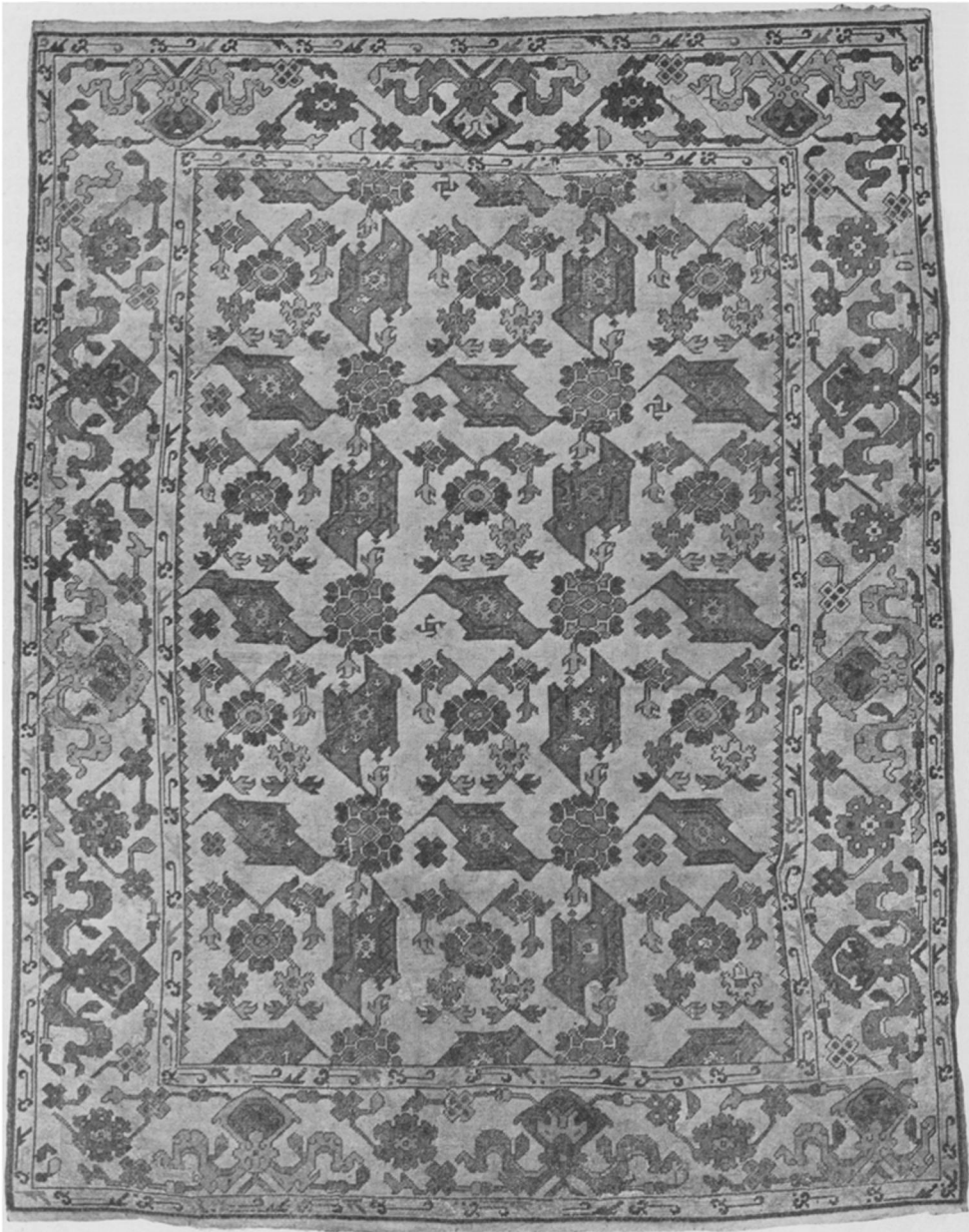
various shaped medallions. Both the medallions and the spaces between, as well as the broad stems and palmettes of the main border, are detailed with conventional flowers and arabesques. This rug, with its soft coloring, blue, pink, red, white and yellow, is a great contrast to the strongly colored Asia Minor rugs. Few rugs like this have been found, but as far as one can tell by a photograph, this rug is the exact counterpart of one in the Museum of Industrial Art in Düsseldorf, Germany.

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S. G. F.



Asia Minor Rug, "Bird Design"